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AUTHOR	Bryson, Bill
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ABSTRACT

Claiming that understanding the social context in which words are formed is necessary to appreciate the richness and vitality of language, this book presents an informal, discursive examination of how and why American speech came to be the way it is, and in particular where the words came from. The book follows a roughly chronological format from the first European visitors to the backlash against "political correctness" in the 1990s. Some of the many topics addressed in the book include education standards, sexism in language, illiteracy, declining SAT scores, immigration, eating habits, advertising, popular culture, and mass media effects. Chapters in the book are: (1) The "Mayflower" and Before; (2) Becoming Americans; (3) A "Democratical Phrenzy": America in the Age of Revolution; (4) Making a Nation; (5) By the Dawn's Early Light: Forging a National Identity; (6) We're in the Money: The Age of Invention; (7) Names; (8) "Manifest Destiny": Taming the West; (9) The Melting Pot: Immigration in America; (10) When the Going Was Good: Travel in America; (11) What's Cooking?: Eating in America; (12) Democratizing Luxury: Shopping in America; (13) Manners and Other Matters; (14) The Hard Sell: Advertising in America; (15) The Movies; (16) The Pursuit of Pleasure: Sport and Play; (17) Of Bombs and Bunkum: Politics and War; (18) Sex and Other Distractions; (19) From Kitty Hawk to the Jumbo Jet; (20) Welcome to the Space Age: The 1950s and Beyond; and (21) American English Today. Notes on sources, a 275-item select bibliography, and an index are attached. (RS)

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